

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL  
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**MOGAN CULTURAL CENTER  
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL  
KHMER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT I**

**INFORMANT: PERE PEN [CAMBODIA]  
INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI AND (?)  
DATE: MAY 3, 2003**

**? = OTHER INTERVIEWER  
P = PERE  
A = ALI**

**Tape 03.11  
Side A**

?: Today is May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, and we're here at 660 Middlesex Street, and we're about to interview Pere Pen. Um, where and when were you born?

P: I was born in June 12, 1947.

?: And where were you born?

P: In the Province of Svay Rieng where it is near the Thai, near the Vietnam border, known as the [unclear] during the Vietnam War.

?: Now was that in the northern, or the southern?

P: South. South.

?: Southern Asia?

P: South. Along Highway One, direct to it. The Highway One is from Phnom Penh to Saigon.

?: Did you always live there?

P: No, I was there (--) I was born there, but I was born there and raised in the capitol city. I came to high school in Phnom Penh. One of the high schools that, the number one

high school in Cambodia. (?: Wow) Yah, the number one high school. And at the age of I believe, fourteen, I came to the capitol city to live with my older brother who, who was the high school teacher.

?: So was your family rich? Is that how you [unclear]?

P: Um, this is the high school belonged to the government. We don't pay. We don't pay to go to school in high school.

?: What did your parents do for work?

P: My parent was Chief of District.

?: And what is that?

P: The Chief of District, that means almost like the Mayor of Lowell.

?: He was a politician?

P: Yah. Well he is the, you can say politician, or he is the administrator. He's the role model in his district.

A: So you said he's the Chief of the District?

P: Yah, Chief of the District, yah.

?: And what were their names?

P: His name, my father named, last name Pen, and his first name [Neun?].

?: [Unclear] Oh, is that where you got your last name?

?: Where my last name Pen. And also my last name Pen is my grandfather's name. And he (--) Interesting my family. He, my grandfather is the Chief of Staff of the King Norodom. And who is King Norodom? He's the grandfather of King Sihanouk. Okay.

A: So how was your, how did your family get involved with the royalty and administration?

P: When he was the District, Chief of District, he was elected.

A: Okay.

P: That's my father. When my grandfather was the Chief of Staff of the King Norodom, I believe in that time through my father telling me, that when the King select who was their staff, they select through the family. They have a descendent to name in the family,

which they trust, whom they trust, and they just pick two of them. My uncle, who is my father's elder brother, also picked to serve the King Monivong. King Monivong who after King (--) Let me see. King Norodom, and then King Sisovath, and then King Monivong. And my uncle, one of my uncles served King Monivong, and they're picked by the family.

A: Okay.

P: Yah.

A: Any interesting stories about your family and the kings?

P: Um, interesting, the one interesting when that was, when they, the French Troop seized the power from King Norodom in 1886, he was there. He saw the whole thing and described to my, to his family. And my father, you know, told me about the story, how the French put the bayonet, and you know, and asked the king to, the power. So um, and also my family sort of among the educated class in Cambodia during the past. And also during my time my brother and sister go to school, and we did not know in that time was my family, my father is the role model in the community. We didn't know that. We just go to school, study hard and you know, and with the [unclear] of my brother and sister, everybody look after my family. They sort of not poor, not rich, but well-off. We don't owe anybody. Yah.

?: How many people are in your family?

P: I have, including me, I have three brothers, two sisters.

?: Two sisters?

P: Including, yah. Two sisters, yah. Three brothers including me, is going to be, my family have four sons and two girls.

?: Did any of you guys want to go into politics?

P: Well you consider that politic, my older brother, ah, my older sister joined the Khmer Rouge. She was the high school teacher.

?: Oh, she was the high school teacher?

P: Yah. She joined the Khmer Rouge in 1971.

?: 1971.

P: Umhm.

A: How did she get involved in the Khmer Rouge?

P: Okay. Here is the interesting that and I'll get into that. When my father was the Chief of District in 1955, King Sihanouk transferred his power, transferred the kingship to his father. So he did politics. And that time was the, one of the stronger political party that tried to dominate Cambodian politics was [Somkum Rinium?] Political Party. The [Somkum], or the [Somkum Rinium] headed by King Sihanouk. We no longer call him King. We call him, people call him the Chief of State, or something. He no longer King, because his father became the King. During that campaign, 1955, um, somehow I was there, the whole thing in the late rainy day, rainy night when my father came from campaigning there was a group of people, five people came to knock in my townhouse, and looking to shoot at him. To, looking to apprehend him, or kill him. And my father came back from campaigning around 8:00. He, he was having supper, late supper alone at the, at the rear part of the house, that where the kitchen and the dining room is. When he hear that, come, they say, chop chop, it's the word say that to apprehend, you know. And he just jumped through the door and fled from that, from those men. And they couldn't, they shoot him, but they didn't hold him, or wounded him, and turn back, shoot rampage in the house. And my older sister was hit across her leg, her thigh. Both thigh were, were shot through, but missed the bone. And I have witness of that. He live, the doctor who, who take care of that wound is Doctor [Gin Sokosung], he now lives I believe in Maryland right now. I met him from time to time. He remember me, remember my family very well. And he you know, can describe what was happen when my sister brought to his attention at the hospital.

And from that, even though the Democratic Party lost the election to this [Somkum Rinium?], but my father told me that, do not do politics. Do not do politics, okay. That's how he, that's how he you know, tell us, warning us not to participate in politics. He said, "It's not real democracy here, democracy for the few, not for every people." We, we, we're not about to live in this environment where we can do free campaigning, free election. So he warning us not to do any politics. But my sister had got wounded in her body. She said to bring you know, people to, send them to be free. That time the Khmer Rouge was the one, one of the interesting during that period, the Khmer Rouge leadership, who are mostly teacher and mostly people who, who people liked. They straight, they not corrupt, well disciplined, well organized, and they don't corrupt, they very good working for people as a role model of the country; that have many intellectuals during the Khmer Rouge.

[Cell phone rings and he apologizes. Tape is put on pause]

P: Even though you don't want, it's not in there, but something that, a piece of history that's very important. You don't have this view from anyone.

A: No, no, this is really important stuff. So.

P: And when, that (--) Okay, go ahead.

A: You're on.

P: Oh, this is some of the reason why my sister joined the Khmer Rouge. And apparently I don't know where she is now. And I do not expect the Khmer Rouge to kill a lot of people. I have no idea, because I met [unclear], and his colleague. I met several of them when I was in Cambodia, before he fled to the jungle and started his revolution. And I did not think that he killed as many people as it was. I, till today, I put a question mark on that, why? Because from the person whom I know, they all not that cruel. There's something behind the story, the Killing Field, that so they killed so many people. [Name unclear], who are now still living, he's not a wild man. And I put the question mark, why? Why? If I'm with him I would ask that question, you know, why? Because through I know him, I met him, talk to him, I don't believe he's a cruel man.

A: Tell us about the time when you met him?

P: When I met them I was the senior in high school. And during 1967 there was a Chinese control revolution. And they spread that revolution to Cambodia. One instance they, they have, they call the art exhibit in Cambodia, especially in Phnom Penh. And since that time I, [Name unclear] is the role model for my sister and her husband. Her and my brother-in-law tried to bring me to, to the middle [coughs]. Excuse me. So they have many students volunteer to work for the exhibit. And that's how I met Mr. [name unclear].

?: And what were you, were you studying for a specific thing while you were in school?

P: I, you know, in, the school system in Cambodia are very different from United States. It seemed to me like the teachers have more power to enforce the discipline. And all my parents did was make sure that I go to school on time, and come home after school, and also they monitor if I did homework or not. And also this too, when I was very young starting school, they want me to recite the multiplication table before I go to sleep. So I knew multiplication table by heart, recite every night before go to sleep since I was fourth grade. So to make sure, because math is something like basic, you know addition, you know subtraction, you know multiplication and then you know, division. When you got down those four operations, you have the foundation of math that's how my parents taught me. So I was, you know, when I was in school I was so good on that because of my foundation. And when I came, after I finished high school I start, I went to college and that was Phnom Penh Technical University. I was there for two years and then I joined the Air Force, the time that the Vietnamese invasion to Cambodia. The Vietnamese, the North Viet Cong and the North Vietnam and the Viet Cong used our land, which, where I was there, where my native providence was used by the Vietnamese to attack the American Troop over there. So we, we knew that our country in trouble so we try to prevent from the Vietnamese not to use our country. And the King Sihanouk was, support the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong we disagree with that. And he thought, oh wow, not feel comfortable when the student disagree with, with him. He went to France and then to Russia, and then to China to start his own revolution with the Khmer Rouge.

?: Were you living in your native hometown at that time, or were you in school?

P: I was in school in Phnom Penh, but we communicate back and forth because my parents live in that town.

?: [Unclear]?

P: Yah, when I, my family experienced the B52 bombing, they shattered the [tower, the roof tower] was shattered and falling into the ground because they're so close. It's about 30 kilometer away from the house, and the B52 damaged, in 1969 they damaged a whole lot of people's house. And like the glass are broken, the tower, the roof tower was you know, lose and shaken and falling off, you know. That, many people over here never experienced that.

?: Did you leave the country shortly after that, or did you?

P: No. I was an Air Force Captain, and I flew the airplane, air to ground support for over a thousand mission. In 1975 the American government cut off the aid to Cambodia, and then we have nothing to fight for. And we lost the war to the Khmer Rouge. But first I stress this very important, the American involvement in the Vietnam War brought Cambodia to have their own war. They, the CIA support [unclear] to [unclear]. And then the kingdom of Cambodia no longer exist. They become, they republic, the first republic ever in Cambodian history in March 19, March 18, 1970.

A: And where were you at that time?

P: That time I was in I think military school. [Interrupted by noise-Pere apologizes] Even though I'm not a politician, but I'm still involved, somehow people just you know, try, like to talk politic to me. Okay.

?: You said you went on over a 1,000 missions. Do you have any interesting stories to tell?

P: About the air to ground mission is something I have so many war stories you can you know, you hear from me, but the thing is, it reminds me the Cambodian war that we kill each other so hard, try to, we try to free ourselves from the dictatorship monarchy, and also to be free from the Communists. That not many people understand that during the war there are two class that you can see during the war, the officer and the troops. The officer have very high moral, because those officers who were before 1970 were the students from the university who demonstrated against Sihanouk, and the Communists, and the Viet Cong. They, most joined the arm forces to fight against the Vietnamese, and also of the troop that in [military school] that became sergeant, all of that, they were really highly moral, have high moral to fight again. And they are not fleeing to join the Khmer Rouge in that time, only the population that brainwashed by the Communists doctrine, that join the Khmer Rouge in the jungle. That's how the fight between the Khmer Rouge and the republic was so strong, we were able to sustain again the, again the invasion troop in 1970 against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. Because that time

we were not prepared. Then the CIA encouraged us to fight against the regular troop of the North Vietnam and the Viet Cong without prepare, without preparation that having enough arm and ammunition to fight against the regular troop of those Vietnamese Army who eventually fight, fought against the Vietnamese Force and the American Force. Because the night in 1969 they bombed, the bombardment by the B52 along the Vietnamese border that closed the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong deep into Cambodia, deep into the heart of Cambodia, and that time at the end of 1969 (--) The end of 1969 they (--)

[Someone enters room. Pere invites them to sit down and listen in on interview]

A: [Unclear]

P: Yah. Okay, um, this is a piece of oral history that you hear from me, one of the few survivors of that war. And I was there. I fought during that time. And the Vietnamese and the Viet Cong pushed into Cambodia, and they about to take the capitol city. And we fought with very less armament and ammunition. We fought by heart, by willingness we were able to sustain and defend the capitol city in 1970. And that time there was the troop that the CIA organized, [unclear] that were two divisions of them, fought, came to rescue us, because they have full armament with the South Vietnam Air Force help them too. So we able, and American Air Force too, we were able to push the Vietnamese, the North Vietnam and the Viet Cong out of the, away from the capitol city. That's what happened, that in 1970.

A: In 1970.

P: Umhm.

A: During the time of the [Coo?]

P: After the [Coo].

A: After?

P: Yah, yah. And also when during the war at that time, it's not only that division came, also the first division, the first division of Vietnamese army command buy General [unclear], are also part of the rescue too. And they, when they came across Cambodia, then they take everything too. They all were bad to Cambodia. Even the Communists, or the, or not the Communists. When the Vietnamese came to Cambodia, they all bad, even though they say they chased the North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, but they go across the village, they rampage, kill everyone, take the Vietnam women, take the animal, pig and dog, and cats, and you know, and buffalo and ox, and cows, everything. That's how the Khmer Rouge gained their popularity and recruit a lot of people to fight with them. Yah.

A: So tell us a few more stories about that period between 1970 and '75.

P: During 1970 I'll tell you what, this is very important to know that the war ended because of the, in America the Communists side, the Chinese, the Vietnamese and the Russian understand how the war going. They understand that they have a hard time to win the war in Vietnam by force. So they influence the public opinion about a war in Vietnam, in America. So the United States Congress stopped funding to Vietnam and Cambodia. So they win the war. It's not (--) It's not that the Vietnamese win by force. That was wrong. And the Vietnamese claim that the win, have the [unclear], or they have the victory in Vietnam over American Forces. That's a damn lie! I don't believe that. That, Americans stopped funding the war. This is the truth. It's not American lost the battle. I stand for it, I fought with them, and I, I assure you that was, [that we're wrong.] Because we kill a lot of them. We withdraw, we did not, we did not [unclear] because of lack of funding. The same thing with, in Cambodia. Okay? This is, not many people knew and understand that. Only the top American politician at that time would understand that. Yup. And the book did not write that too. I saw some American history book did not state this at all. That was the fact. And during the war we, seemed to me like two part of the war, two party of the war that people live in the countryside at Khmer Rouge, majority of people who live in the city are [Republican], a defender of the country. And people think that we are the slave of America, or something like that, and I said, "No, we fought for ourselves. We did not fight for America in that time. We fight for freedom. We fight for self-determination in that time."

Side A ends

Side B begins

P: And so many stories, and war stories, I don't know what part you want to know.

A: Maybe just give us a story about a famous battle in that five-year period before the Khmer Rouge took over.

P: Um, one, I did the air-to-ground support, so many of them I do not know which one I'm going to you know, tell you. And for this, I tell you this, not the famous ah (--) Okay, for myself the big accomplishment is during 1973 in June, there were no longer American assistant to Cambodia far as the air to ground support. There no longer a bombardment in Cambodia in 19, again in 1973, in June. So the North Vietnamese used our territory, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the famous story about the Ho Chi Minh Trail lies on that in Cambodia. And they're able to stop the [ammunition piled] along the Mekong River in Stung Treng. We did not have that information. The American, even though they stopped the bombing, but they still taking picture of the activity. They still spy on top from the air. And they took pictures on Stung Treng along Mekong River. The ammunition then, there's so many of them, because American no longer drop the bomb. So they, the Cambodia Air Force have no airplane to reach there by, go out there and come back with same air base. So, yah, we used the T28 as the airplane, air-to-ground. We were able to put the 500-pound bomb, six of them, three in each wing. That's how much we carry on the T28. And if the T28 go to Stung Treng have to stop refueling in Kompong Thom to be able to [unclear]. Then when American Air Force asked us to do



that, they asked for volunteer. One of my first, of the first volunteer was me. I led the patrol, or the flight, the two flight, I led one of the flight. The first attempt was only for aircraft. And I was the, my (--) The first group go there, but I was on the second flight. The first flight was Captain [Yim] who lost their life. And I remember his, his wingman still alive in California. And one of my wingman at that time live Long Beach, California too. I went to drop the bomb in that, in the place where the North Vietnamese have a lot of anti-aircraft gun and believe having missile too. I flew to that. Dropped the bomb. Don't even need to, well to aim, really aim to the target, because it's so enormous, big [unclear]. So I just flew by and dropped. And coming back I saw the Vietnamese shoot at us. All of that, it was so, you know, after [unclear] was the explosion, explosion on that, and came back to land at Kompong Thom. It happened to me that I was so lucky that the T28 is so old. And they all leak in the engine. When I land the engine so hot, when I checked the oil there was not a drop in the oil tank. I was so lucky.

A: How many more miles before the engine would have konked out?

P: It could be in the next second, next minute. I was so lucky. And then they refueled, put the oil back, and I flew back to the Capitol City.

A: Yah.

P: Yah.

A: Now you said these planes were old. How old were they?

P: These planes were built in 1955; the last one in 1955. It's the Air Force Trainer, U.S. Air Force Trainer at that time, built after World War II, right after World War II. It was a good plane, but they're old. The airplane that was in the obsolete inventory already, and cleaned up and re-hauling, and overhaul the engine and sent back to Cambodia. The war in Cambodia, the U.S. spend very cheap instrument, very cheap airplane for us to fly. And many of my classmates and my wingmen were crashed and killed just because the engine quit, not the, not the shooting down by the Khmer Rouge.

A: Did the Khmer Rouge have their own planes? (P: No) None.

P: None. Yah. And so many of them in my you know, let me, one, one thing I like you to know too. After that bomb, it's about two months later there was a target provided by the U.S. Air Force, also by the, by the, by the military intelligence, that King Sihanouk had formed a government in Cambodia. That was 1974. And he [unclear], he came from China to visit Cambodia at that time. And we knew that he was supposed to be in Kompong Cham, where they have their training, military training school there. He visit the place. And we knew that he's supposed to be in that day, in the hour there.

A: And this was a military training center for the Khmer Rouge?

P: Yah, yah, the Khmer Rouge. And we call, the place called [unclear]. We planned to bomb the place while we gather all the T28 in the country to assemble in Phnom Penh. And then we supposed to take out the engine start. I was the first one in my air, Wing Commander who is now living, go back to Cambodia to do something over there. I don't know, he is Phnom Penh. I was one of the first flight. And he picked me to become his wingman. Then you know, and then we, the order from the Command and Staff of the Cambodian Armed Forces to abort, to abort the mission. And I still don't know why, okay. And then two weeks later we finally went to drop the bomb in that place. What does that mean?

A: And in the meantime the King had gone back to China?

P: Well he's probably still in there, or something. From what people told me, this true or not, that [name unclear] did not want to kill the king. He still respect the king. As I was told he still respect the king until the day he died. And we all were so, our morale was low at that time, and questioning why it's so, why we fight for, why you know, we [unclear] and the uncertainty why we carry the war, you know, to kill each other, you know at that time. In one of my, previously before that time, one of my classmate, he's my roommate, dropped the bomb on [unclear] Palace in Phnom Penh.

A: By accident?

P: No, not accident. He just wanted to kill [name unclear]. (A: Really) Now they're living in France. He dropped the bomb and he land in the [unclear] who is the Province occupied by the, controlled by the North Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge in that time. And then he lived there till 1977, and he finally flew the chopper, land in Thailand. A real survivor story that you should look for him to interview him by you know, because this is a very, very unique, unique situation.

A: What was his name?

P: His name was Pech Lim Kuon

A: How do you spell that?

P: Kuon is (--) Pech is last name, P E C H. Lim Kuon, L I M K U O N. My roommate.

A: So did he become Khmer Rouge?

P: He's, when I met him we talked over, he was not a Khmer Rouge. (A: No) He just unhappy with the way they conduct the war, and he want the war to end soon, because we, he understand that we kill each other, we not really kill the enemy. That the only reason that he did that, he told me, we destroy ourselves. We destroy the temple. We destroy the Khmer Rouge, who are Khmer also. And he frustrated. He did not know what to do. He really want to end the war without no longer, with no longer kill each other. That's what he told me. Interesting that guy. And he you know, able to survive

through the Khmer Rouge. Still one of the chopper, the Khmer Rouge, and land in Thailand. That's a [unclear] for him, you know.

?: Have you talked to him recently?

P: No, not recently, but I met him once we had a class reunion in Long Beach, California in 1996 I met him.

?: He lives in France now?

P: Yes.

?: And what happened after you bombed the people. What happened after the 1973 [unclear]?

P: Well 1973, during that bombing [unclear], I don't know if we killed anyone in that time. It just you know, that bombardment, the king was not there. Of course if the king was there he [would have been] hit by something, but you know, finally he was not there. So we, we probably kill all the animals. Yah. And that was one of the, you know, highlight of the operation in that time. And we lost the war. And I married, I was married in 1975 in March 9<sup>th</sup>, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1975 I married [name unclear] my hometown girl. I dropped the bomb, and then landed T28, and married her. Put her in an airplane and fly to the Capitol City. And that time I was in charge of the air. I was in charge of the Air Base Operation in the Air Base near Kompong Thom, we call Air Base 122. That is near Kompong Thom right now. It's still there they say. And you know, and we, our last mission was 1975. April the 16<sup>th</sup> I dropped the bomb, Napalm on top of the control tower in Phnom City right now, [from the Airport].

A: Really. (P: Yes) And the Khmer Rouge had already seized it?

P: The Khmer, yah, the Khmer Rouge went on the top, put the [heavy (unclear)] machine gun and shoot at the troop. So one of my classmates who flew, and the [unclear] the H, UH1 gunship, direct me to take the control tower, yah. And I flew so low to [unclear] gun, flew so low on top of the buildings, you know, straight to the tower, and realized that at 6:00 and a little bit dark. And it's so many traces, trace, bullet trace from the ground, I thought I'm going to hit. You know, after I land, at night, my air base, I you know, use the flashlight to check my airplane. There was not a single hole in my airplane. Believe it or not, it's just like rain drop from the sky. When you see the fire from the ground. And the airplane that, the commercial airplane there in front of the tower were hit and burned it all. And in 1999 I went back to visit Cambodia, and when the airplanes would land I saw the same control tower still stand there and I wonder, "What, what did I do to that control tower?" Yes, I was, it's amazing that they were, the control tower back in the same place. But the napalm just only burned, but not destroyed the whole thing like in the [unclear] bomb demolish. The demolition is not enormous like the [unclear] bomb, the Napalm. So it was [unclear]. I was, you know, I didn't tell anybody in that time during my visit in Cambodia that I dropped the control tower. I

didn't, I didn't tell anyone, you know. But there are witness that live in this country know that I dropped that bomb. Yah, because my wingman still alive. (A: Yah) And I believe the man who direct, who flew the gunship still alive. Yah.

A: You should give us their names so we can record them.

P: Yah, my wingman, his name is, I forgot his last name, but his name is Torth, T O R T H. He lives in Long Beach, California now. And, and the, okay. There are two gunship flew in that time. The one, one gunship, the one who direct me, he went back to Cambodia, got killed by the Khmer Rouge. He went back from [Unclear] Air Force, U.S. Air Force Base, and he got killed by the Khmer Rouge. And the other one now still living in Long Beach. I believe his, he played the Killing Field, [do the] Khmer Rouge. His name [unclear]. The number two gunship who directed me at that time. If you talk to the [T28] pilot, there are so many stories to tell about. Each one flew at least 500 mission, up to 3000 mission, believe it or not. There are people who flew air to ground support 3000 mission I met the other day in Virginia. I met him. And why the mission, so many of them, because of if you compare to American pilot who flew the F4, or F105, to drop the bomb in Vietnam, one day they fly only one mission or two mission, no more than five mission, because of the length of the trip from Thailand to North Vietnam. If the target is in Cambodia, they can fly within, back and forth within one hour. But if they go to North Vietnam, [unclear] and back were two hour, three hours. So that's why one day I flew about seven mission, two, two hour, to fifteen missions from five o'clock to eight o'clock at night. Sometime I did night dropping too, drop the bomb. That very unique to use the T28 to drop the bomb at night, you know. So it had never been used before to drop the bomb at night with a T28. We were not that sophisticated like the F111, the F4C, or the B52. We are not that sophisticated. And we still do that mission, because the love of flying and the love of defending the country.

?: While you were off at war was your family still in your hometown?

P: Um, my family, my immediate family for my wife, is still living in [Svay Rieng] in that time. And my father and my brother in Phnom Penh that time. When I left in April, I left the country in April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2:00, from my airbase to [name unclear] Air Force Base.

A: In the morning you left?

P: No, 2:00 in the afternoon. The war in Cambodian just only to capture of the Capitol City make the end of the war. Because it seemed to me like there are no plans to fight back, because there's no more support from the U.S. Government who [get] us to fight against the Communists. It just, it seemed to me like America abandoned us, who are good friends, help fighting the war in Vietnam.

A: So were you (--)

P: We all felt that way. We all felt that way during that time that the America abandoned us alone.

A: When you came back from your last mission there, how long was it before you went to Thailand?

P: The next day.

A: The next day. And what made you folks make that decision?

P: We all [unclear] American Air Force. And some of our teachers, some of our friends still stationed in Thailand. And there were officers who worked side by side with us at the [unclear] in Phnom Penh. And they, before there were no [evacuation plan] for Cambodia like Vietnam. And Vietnam had [evacuation] plan. I remember the [Chief of Mission] they call Advisory Group, is Colonel Johnson, he let us know that if the capitol city fail you have nowhere to go, join us at the [name unclear]. [Name unclear] was the American Air Force Base during that time that they [unclear] Air Force Base that located the B52 and the SR71, or U2 Airplane were there. When I flew to, put my wife in the back seat and took off from the [unclear] Air Base and to land in [name unclear] is only 55 minutes away. So you know, that I was safe, I knew because the Capitol City were falling in. And no, no plan, no other thing we have to, you know, you're the, our teacher there. Yah.

A: Did anybody want to stay? Or did anybody stay?

P: That time one of my wingman stayed. He didn't, [name unclear], well I'm going to stay with my family.

A: What happened to him?

P: So far I got the news that he's still alive.

A: He is?

P: No. I have no news that he's still alive. He's a good man, good officer. Good man. He say if he took the T28 out with me, how about his mother, his father, his sister, all of that, nowhere to go. He did not, he want to be killed with his family. That's his determination, whom I respect him a lot, you know, by making that decision. I told him, well you can bring one of your, the one that you like, that love them the most, put in your back seat and come with me. And he said, no, I love the equally, my father, my mother. So I'm not you know, going to do that. You know, so there's so many sad stories about the war. When the victory is not there you have a lot of sad stories. And well, you want to know my life in the United States, or what?

?: You came here with your wife?

P: Yah, I came with my wife, land in the [Unclear] Air Force Base. I lived in [unclear] Refuge Camp. You can call refugee camp then. There was, you know what, something

distinguished between all of us from the Vietnamese, that the Vietnamese, American [have evacuation plan]. They, we came, we were falling in April 17, 1975, and the Vietnamese fail, the Vietnamese in August 28 I believe, we were there waiting for what do to next. Are we going to fight back? Are Americans supporting us to go back to fight, or what? We had that question always. We did not want to stop because we know that the communists are not staying in the country. If the communist win Cambodia, the Vietnamese are going to take over. We knew that, but not many people understand that domino theory. Some people here still don't believe Nixon's Theory about the domino theory. And it is true that it is well. That of course in that time there was suffering. It's the United, it's a Communist country, Cambodia and you know. If the, if the Russian did not, the Soviet Union did not fail, the [Thai] would be next, you know, but it's not. Okay. Coming back from the point that I want to make, that we were in [name unclear]. We [wait], but the Vietnamese pilot who flew the F5, our plane to land in [name unclear], they land and then the American Air Force picked them up right away from the plane, fly to Honolulu, fly to Hawaii, or fly to (--) [Someone enters room] Come on in. You can sit and listen to the, my story. These two students interview my life and under the supervision of the teacher, interview me for the life story, my life story. Okay. Interesting. You, you can know part of my life. We came (--) You know, we felt so bad in that time because why they accept the Vietnamese. They don't accept us. In that time we were in limbo that the camp, the camp Commander, Captain [name unclear], and did not tell us where we go. American government going to take us [unclear], while the Vietnamese came and fly straight to the United States. And they were there. We fought the war, same kind of war. We did not. We are so bad. Some are about to kill American Commanding Officer there.

A: Really?

P: Yah. We feel, we feel betrayed by the U.S. Government. Some of my classmates you know, thinking about, "Hey, I'm going to kill one over here," you know, but I say, "No, it's not worth it." He is like also the government. He did not make the policy. He did not make decision why we kill for. So we, we get reason by wisdom, you know, not to do that. Yah, we finally forty days, no, not forty days, a little after two months (--)

End of Interview